



# Table



# Talk



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## Hot colors and handmade in Marseille: meet the tableware brand making French mealtimes more fun.

Alice Moireau and Caroline Perdrix met in 2016 on the set of a fashion shoot in Paris. Caroline, then a full-time womenswear designer, hired Alice, a model, for a shoot for her latest collection. They got on so well that Caroline hired Alice for four seasons. 'We both love cooking, eating and sharing moments with people,' says Alice. 'We fast became friends.'

During one of their meals together, they started talking about how much they liked dressing their dining tables in the kinds of colors they'd wear themselves. 'The tabletop is a means for self-expression,' says Caroline, who rarely wears black, calls herself a color fanatic and has decorated her home in yellows and blues. Alice, meanwhile, even likes to match her table with her outfit. 'If I'm wearing a pink dress, there'll be flourishes of pink on the table, so it all goes together.'

This ended up becoming the starting concept for Table, the homeware brand that they established together in Marseille in 2021. They also aim to inject fun into the deep-rooted ritual of French mealtimes. 'The food culture here is intense,' explains Alice, who lives in Paris. 'We take hosting and dining so seriously. It's not a cliché – we really do go all out.' But, she continues, the French aesthetic is 'ordinarily quite neutral. Lots of whites and beige. We didn't see ourselves in the offerings available at the time.'

Playfulness and vibrancy are part of Table's DNA. The brand's brightly checkered tablecloths are woven using traditional techniques near the Vosges Mountains in eastern France and are hand-assembled in Marseille. Each seems distinct, thanks to its patchwork, homespun feel. Contrasting checked panels are torn up and sewn back together to make each piece a unique artwork that could be hung on the wall or spread across a summer lawn, just as it could be placed underneath plates and bowls.

'We used purples, yellow, oranges... colors that weren't typically French, to show that we were different,' says

Caroline, speaking of the graphic cloths. 'We wanted to show that high-end, artisanally made goods could have a fun touch – that it didn't have to be so serious.'

Since then, the offering has expanded to include aprons, napkins, ceramic dinner plates decorated with 3D surrealist motifs, technicolor raffia place mats and wooden salt and pepper mills that riff on mid-century design pieces. It's charmingly mismatched: a sort of anything-goes aesthetic that encourages individuality and inspires the feeling of a home curated over time. Most products are made in collaboration with small, individual workshops across France.

'Wherever we can, we try to work with artisans here,' says Caroline. There's a romance attached, especially for clients from the US and Japan, where there are big markets for products direct from source. 'Sometimes I think our customers elsewhere value French craft more than French people do,' says Alice. 'We're just so used to it here.'

Finding artisans and factories willing to take a risk on a new brand can be challenging for anyone just starting out. 'It's difficult to get the minimum order volumes,' says Caroline, who manages most of the production schedule and relationships with makers. Her experience working with factories for her fashion label proved useful: she was familiar with lead times, the sampling process and how to get a foot in the door.

The duo used this to their advantage in negotiations. 'We were able to [order] only 300 meters when the minimum order was 1,000 meters,' she says. Being close to the supplier enables both parties to build trust: it's easier to communicate in the same language and within the same time zone. 'And it's important to be able to see and touch the samples, when you're dealing with something so tactile,' Alice adds.

Contacts also helped. A partnership with a Ghanaian women's co-operative came via an introduction from a fashion designer friend. 'She'd made bags with them, using





**'Cooking brought everyone together!'**

this weaving technique that you can't find in France,' says Caroline. 'We asked them to make place mats, which was risky for us as they'd never created anything flat before.'

That the group was trusted by a friend helped mitigate their worries. And it paid off: the place mats, which are oval-shaped and use clashing colors like fuchsia and yellow, are among TABLE's bestsellers. 'If we can't find the craft in France, or if it's too expensive, the experience has given them the confidence to 'look elsewhere for artisans', says Alice.

Although it's more time-consuming, Alice and Caroline think that working with multiple workshops is a good business safety net. The brand's stripy wooden chopping boards are made using marquetry techniques (a craft using different colored woods) in Pantin, in the suburbs of Paris, while the abstract egg cups, which are a matte clay and mimic the shape of a star, are made to order in the Loir-et-Cher region. 'Not investing all your time and energy into one maker gives you greater control if anything happens,' says Alice.

They founded the brand on a shoestring budget. As such, existing connections were key. 'I knew graphic designers and web developers, who generously created our site for us for pretty cheap,' says Alice. Leaning on friends for advice was fundamental to getting Table off the ground; she thinks new business owners should never be afraid to ask for assistance.

Each invested several thousand euros into the company upon launch, most of which went into production. They needed to be savvy and save costs wherever they could. 'It challenges you creatively to work this way,' says Caroline.

They remain careful when it comes to finance. Both still work independently from Table: Alice continues modeling and event planning, while Caroline works as an art director and freelance designer. Splitting their time between Table and other side projects helps keep the cash flowing – and takes the pressure off. 'To build something from the start, if you're not full of money... it can be hard,' says Caroline.

Their collective multifaceted experience also affords them a constantly evolving perspective – whether that's about which product to launch next (glassware), growing their wholesale partners or how to expand the Table experience.

'We want to eventually go into events, hosting dinners with chefs,' says Alice, who already organizes such evenings for big French brands. She sees it as a way to create real engagement with Table. Bringing people together – especially those whose paths might not ever otherwise meet – broadens Table's horizons, enabling the founders to connect with potential clients outside of their own echo chambers and creative circles.

For Alice, 'There's something very special about eating dinner with strangers. I think people learn to be naive, people are more open and friendly and you can discover things about yourself through people who are opposites.'

Alice relishes the ritual of hosting, and creating and curating connection. 'I'm friends with the nerds, with business people and artists... I'd invite them all to my house at the weekend, and they'd all be there, peeling potatoes,' she says. 'Even though they had so many differences, cooking brought everyone together.'

The same could be said for her relationship with Caroline, who lives in a different city. 'We bring different perspectives to the table, literally,' says Caroline. 'Alice is very good on Instagram and has a following, which has helped us. She does the marketing and art directs our photography. I'm good at the production, packaging and infrastructure side.'

Alice agrees: 'Caroline knows how to run a business, as she did it for 10 years. She knows about margins and prices in a way that I wouldn't.'

Still, both play a central role in designing each collection. 'But we don't have to create a new collection each season,' says Caroline. 'It's different from fashion in that way.'

In December, Table hosted a pop-up at one of Alice's favorite womenswear stores in the Marais, Paris. Focusing exclusively on their lineware, they hung tablecloths on the walls. 'They're always folded in shops, so you can never see them,' says Alice, who said it was a great way to engage with customers who might not have found them online.

Throughout the pop-up, she offered shoppers panettone, croissants, coffee and hot chocolate. 'Food makes people happy,' she says. 'We like to facilitate those joyful moments.' 🍴



**'Food makes**



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